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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS IRAN-IRAQ MILITARY OBSERVER GROUP

(for the period 21 November 1990-27 January 1991)

Introduction

1. On 28 November 1990, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 676 (1990), in which it decided to renew the mandate of the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) until 31 January 1991 and requested the Secretary-General to submit, during January 1991, a report on his further consultations with the parties about the future of UNIIMOG, together with his recommendations on the matter.

2. Accordingly, the present report covers the period from 21 November 1990 to 27 January 1991 and is intended to provide the Security Council with an account of the manner in which UNIIMOG has carried out the mandate entrusted to it during that period.

3. It will be recalled that, in paragraph 18 of my report of 23 November 1990 (S/21960), I recommended that, during the two-month extension period that I had recommended, UNIIMOG's tasks should be:

(a) To resolve the remaining problems on the border;

(b) To try to arrange an exchange of information between the two parties about unmarked minefields;

(c) To assist the parties in negotiating and implementing an area of separation and, thereafter, an area of limitation of armaments.

4. In a technical meeting between military delegations of both parties, held at Tehran on 6 January 1991, which UNIIMOG also attended, substantive agreement was reached on matters relating to UNIIMOG's tasks (for details, see paras. 14-18 below).

5. The activities of UNIIMOG during the period were considerably affected by developments in the Persian Gulf region. The outbreak of hostilities in the area effectively prevented UNIIMOG from continuing its operations in Iraq and all UNIIMOG personnel in Iraq had to be temporarily relocated. The majority of them were moved either to Cyprus or to the Islamic Republic of Iran. All parties concerned provided active support for this purpose.

Composition, command and deployment

6. The command of UNIIMOG has been exercised by the Acting Chief Military Observer, Brigadier-General S. Anam Khan (Bangladesh). On the Iraqi side, Colonel P. Grabner (Austria) took over from Brigadier-General Khan as Acting Assistant Chief Military Observer and Colonel H. Purola (Finland) continued as the Acting Assistant Chief Military Observer on the Iranian side.

7. As recommended in paragraphs 23 and 24 of my report of 23 November 1990 (S/21960), a reduction took place in the strength of the military observers to 60 on the Iranian side, 56 in Iraq and 3 in the Command Group.

8. This reduction in the number of military observers necessitated a major reorganization of UNIIMOG's deployment. On each side a small number of observers were deployed at headquarters with approximately 15 military observers in each of the three sectors. All former team sites were closed as permanently manned locations and became forward patrol bases, which were manned as the situation demanded.

9. On 22 January 1991, the strength of UNIIMOG, including those temporarily relocated in Cyprus and the Islamic Republic of Iran, was as follows:

United Nations military observers

Austria (including the Acting Assistant Chief Military Observer)	7
Bangladesh (Acting Chief Military Observer)	1
Canada	4
Denmark	4
Finland (including the Acting Assistant Chief Military Observer)	9
Hungary	15
India	11
Ireland	1
Italy	11
Malaysia	15
New Zealand	1

Norway	3
Poland	4
Sweden	7
Turkey	1
Uruguay	9
Yugoslavia	11
Zambia	5
	119
Military police unit	
Ireland	17 a/
Medical section	
Austria	4
Total	140

a/ Ten military police personnel, with the agreement of the Irish authorities, have been placed under the operational command of the Force Commander of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) to assist in the reception and administration of United Nations staff and dependants being temporarily relocated from the Middle East.

As a result of the reduction in strength and the suspension of replacement through rotation for that purpose, the following contributing countries are at present not represented in UNIIMOG: Argentina, Australia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Senegal.

10. The Andover aircraft of the Royal New Zealand Air Force and its crew were withdrawn on 31 December 1990. UNIIMOG continues to use two civilian aircraft: a Canadian Twin Otter, leased commercially, which has been relocated from Iraq to Cyprus since 14 January, and a Jetstream, provided as a voluntary contribution by the Government of Switzerland, which is now located at Tehran.

Operations

11. The general situation along the internationally recognized boundaries has remained very calm during the mandate period. UNIIMOG'S concept of operation has been to carry out its tasks by patrolling the entire length of the internationally recognized boundaries with priority being given to the monitoring of disputed positions and sensitive areas. Seven hundred ninety-one patrols were conducted and

238 investigations of disputed positions were carried out. However, the temporary cessation of operations of UNIIMOG-Baghdad as of 18 January 1991, when the last remaining group of observers in Iraq crossed the border into the Islamic Republic of Iran (see para. 19 below), divested UNIIMOG of its ability to monitor the internationally recognized boundaries on the Iraqi side.

12. The parties have been urged to withdraw disputed positions and to provide information on unmarked minefields by exchanging maps and making available to each other officers with knowledge of specific minefields. As at 26 January 1991, the Islamic Republic of Iran had withdrawn 13 out of 17 disputed positions and Iraq had withdrawn 23 out of 29 such positions. The onset of winter has obliged both sides to move back to winter positions, thereby creating a de facto area of separation in the north and to a lesser extent in the central area.

13. A successful repatriation of war dead was conducted in the Faqeh area of Dezful/Sector South on 9 December 1990, involving 196 Iranian war dead and 43 Iraqi war dead. The total of war dead repatriated since the beginning of the UNIIMOG operation is 2,153 Iranians and 2,097 Iraqis. An Iranian proposal to allow the two parties to search for war dead in each other's territory is still under consideration by both parties.

Technical meeting of military experts

14. The two parties agreed to convene a technical meeting of military experts in order to discuss and resolve the questions relating to UNIIMOG's mandate that were still outstanding between them. This agreement was reached bilaterally between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq and the technical meeting was organized outside the framework of the Mixed Military Working Group that UNIIMOG had previously been endeavouring to establish. The Iranian authorities acted as hosts for the meeting, which took place at Tehran on 6 January 1991. At the invitation of both parties, the Acting Chief Military Officer attended.

15. At the meeting, the two parties discussed and reached agreements on the question of disputed positions along the internationally recognized boundaries, the exchange of information on minefields and the establishment of an area of separation along the internationally recognized boundaries. The agreements reached were fully consistent with UNIIMOG's mandate with regard to those three subjects and they provided for UNIIMOG to monitor their implementation within a specified time-frame.

16. With regard to the disputed positions, it was agreed that they would all be removed by 22 January 1991 and that UNIIMOG would then, according to its mandate, verify and confirm the completion of the withdrawal of all forces to the internationally recognized boundaries. The boundaries are described in the Treaty concerning the State Frontier and Neighbourly Relations between Iran and Iraq 1/ of 13 June 1975 and its protocols and annexes. On the question of minefields, the two sides agreed on specific arrangements that would ensure the exchange of necessary information on all unmarked minefields. The agreements reached on the establishment of an area of separation provided, among other things, that this area

would extend 1 kilometre on each side of the internationally recognized boundaries and along their entire length. Its establishment would take place between 10 and 27 January 1991 and UNIIMOG would assist in its full implementation.

17. The two parties also agreed to hold a similar technical meeting at the invitation of the Iraqi authorities at Baghdad on 28 or 29 January 1991. This second meeting would allow a review of the implementation of the agreements reached on 6 January and would also consider the possible establishment of an area of limitation of armaments on each side of the area of separation.

18. UNIIMOG, in accordance with its mandate and the agreements reached by the technical meeting, has observed that the majority of disputed positions have been withdrawn (see para. 12 above). But it has not been able to confirm the full implementation of the agreement on disputed positions within the agreed time-frame. Since the events following 15 January, there has been little progress in the implementation of the understandings relating to mine clearing and the establishment of an area of separation.

Security

19. Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 678 (1990) on 29 November 1990, and considering the situation in the Gulf region, UNIIMOG undertook detailed planning to ensure the security of its personnel without compromising its operational efficiency. With the deterioration of the situation in the second week of January 1991 and the requirement to ensure the safety of UNIIMOG personnel, it was decided as a precautionary measure to thin out the staff, both military and civilian, at the headquarters at Baghdad. On 11 January, 22 international civilian staff, 11 military observers, 10 military police and 1 medical assistant were temporarily relocated to Cyprus. This left the command group and a reduced headquarters at Baghdad. Following my visit to Baghdad on 12/13 January, a decision was taken to relocate UNIIMOG personnel temporarily from Baghdad to the sectors closer to the border so that they could carry out operations from these locations. The command group travelled to Tehran on 14 January and the remaining personnel at Baghdad together with the military observers in the sectors were relocated close to the international boundary in the area of Faqeh, east of Al-Amarah, and Khanaqin, north-east of Mansuriya. Upon the outbreak of hostilities on 16 January 1991, a decision was made to move temporarily all remaining UNIIMOG staff in Iraq into the Islamic Republic of Iran. The group at Khanaqin crossed the border on 17 January. Those at Faqeh crossed into the Islamic Republic of Iran on 18 January, after a 24-hour delay caused by communications difficulties in Iraq. With the assistance of the Iranian authorities, all UNIIMOG-Baghdad personnel have now been transferred from the border areas to Tehran. Forty-five vehicles and communications equipment brought from Iraq have been retained at the sector headquarters at Bakhtaran and Dezful.

Financial aspects

20. By its resolution 45/245 of 21 December 1990, the General Assembly authorized the Secretary-General to enter into commitments for the operation of UNIIMOG, should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of the Group, at a monthly rate not to exceed $3,475,000 gross ($3,269,000 net) beginning 1 February 1991. This authorization is subject to the prior concurrence of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions as to the actual level of commitments to be entered into. If the Council decides to extend UNIIMOG beyond its current mandate, the costs to the United Nations for maintaining the Group during the extension period will be within the commitment authorized by the Assembly in its resolution 45/245.

Observations

21. The agreements reached at the technical meeting on 6 January 1991 constituted a very useful development in the efforts towards the successful completion of UNIIMOG's remaining tasks. The fact that their implementation has not proceeded fully according to schedule is clearly not due to lack of commitment on either side, but is a consequence of the outbreak of hostilities in the area. Indeed, both sides have given firm indications to UNIIMOG that they remain determined to implement fully in due course the arrangements agreed upon on 6 January. They have also confirmed to me that for that purpose they would continue to count on UNIIMOG's presence and assistance.

22. At the same time, the security considerations which led to the decision to relocate temporarily the UNIIMOG-Baghdad component of the mission outside Iraq remain in effect and cannot be ignored when considering the immediate future of UNIIMOG as a whole. It seems clear, however, that with the current level of hostilities in the area UNIIMOG will not be able to operate on one side of its area of responsibility.

23. Notwithstanding current security considerations and their unavoidable effect on operational effectiveness, it is my view that UNIIMOG's mandate should be extended beyond the present mandate period, which expires on 31 January 1991, so that the Group may fulfil completely its important responsibilities. In my consultations with them, the two parties have confirmed that they share this view. It was also understood with them that, pending clarification of the situation in the area, the new mandate extension would have to be for a brief period.

24. I therefore recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNIIMOG for a further period of one month, that is, until 28 February 1991. During that period, should the Council decide on such extension, UNIIMOG's present strength on the Iranian side would be maintained in order to continue the performance of its present tasks to the best of its ability. The UNIIMOG observers who were deployed in Iraq and whose normal tour of duty continues beyond the current mandate period would remain temporarily relocated pending further developments and decisions on UNIIMOG's future.

25. It will be clear from the present report that implementation of paragraphs 1 and 2 of Security Council resolution 598 (1987) is very close to completion. Progress has also been made in facilitating the repatriation of the remaining prisoners of war in fulfilment of paragraph 3 of the resolution. Similarly, I have been informed that, during their bilateral talks, the two countries have dealt with other outstanding issues as called for in paragraph 4 of resolution 598 (1987).

26. What remains to be implemented are the other operative paragraphs, which have already been the subject of preliminary discussions. The role requested of the Secretary-General by the Security Council in those paragraphs is mainly a political one. Paragraph 8, in particular, has taken on added significance in the present circumstances. The manner in which I intend to pursue my task in this regard will, at the appropriate time, be the subject of consultations with both sides. It is my fervent hope that the agreements recently reached at the military level will be fully implemented in the weeks ahead. It would then be possible to focus more directly on the work required to implement the remaining paragraphs.

27. Finally, I wish to pay tribute in the present report to the men and women of UNIIMOG, both military and civilian, who, under the command of the Acting Chief Military Observer, Brigadier-General Anam Khan, have in exceptionally difficult circumstances continued to serve the Organization in an exemplary manner. I also wish to express my appreciation to Ambassador Jan Eliasson for his untiring efforts as my Personal Representative.

Notes

1/ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1017, No. 14903.